COMPLAINTS POLICY

(Updated Jan 2019)

PROMOTING THE VOICE OF YOUNG PEOPLE

How to Make a Comment or Complaint

NI Youth Forum Complaints Handling Procedure

Director's Foreword

The NI Youth Forum (NIYF) is committed to providing the best possible services and programmes to support the education, personal and social development of children and young people in Northern Ireland.

Young people often refer to our programmes as life changing and we are acutely aware of how important they are in helping all young people reach their full potential.

We take complaints about our work very seriously and we seek to resolve any dissatisfaction as quickly and as effectively as possible.

The NIYF Comments and Complaints Handling Procedure has been developed in line with guidance from the Office of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman and aims to set out clear procedures for the handling of complaints.

Our aim is to provide a quick, simple and streamlined complaints service which leads to early resolution as close to the point of first contact as possible. If this is not possible, we will conduct thorough, impartial and fair investigations so you can be confident that we will make evidence based decisions on the facts of each individual case.

We are committed to continuous improvement and we recognise that genuine comments and complaints can provide valuable information to inform business improvement right across the organisation.

Effective management and monitoring of complaints can also help us to identify problems at an early stage so that appropriate action can be taken to avoid repeat problems occurring.

Our aim is to get it right first time, but we recognised that things can go wrong. When they do, we are always willing to listen and to put things right.

It is in all our best interests to work together to resolve complaints swiftly. Effective comments and complaints handling can provide real insight into what we do well and where we can improve. It keeps people at the heart of what we do and helps us to understand your point of view.

Our focus must always be on the children and young people on whose lives we impact every day. We are accountable to them as well as their parents or guardians and the wider community. Our goal is to provide excellent youth development programmes to all.

Chris Quinn
Director

What is a comment?

NIYF defines a comment as:

An expression of praise or appreciation directed at staff or a service delivered by NIYF, a suggested service improvement, or an anonymous complaint where NIYF has no way to respond.

What is a complaint?

NIYF defines a complaint as:

Any expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of NIYF.

A complaint may relate to:

- failure to provide a service;
- inadequate standard of service;
- treatment by or attitude of a member of staff;
- disagreement with a decision where no other remedial procedure exists (for example an appeal) to resolve the matter; and/or
- NIYF's failure to follow the appropriate administrative process or policy.

This list is not exhaustive.

This procedure is **not** appropriate for complaints concerning:

- a routine first-time request for a service;
- issues that are currently in court or have already been heard by a court or a statutory tribunal;
- disputes with services which fall under a contractual complaints procedure.

This list is not exhaustive.

How do I make a comment or complaint?

We will always try to resolve any complaint within the relevant frontline service first.

You can make a comment or complaint in person, by telephone, in writing, by email or online. NIYF will accept comments and complaints made on behalf of another party where accessibility issues exist.

When making a complaint, you should provide as much information as possible including:

- your name and contact details;
- what your complaint is about;
- what you have already done to try to resolve it;
- which NIYF services / staff you have contacted; and
- what you would like NIYF to do.

Contact us:

Telephone:
+44 (0) 28 9033 1990

By Post:
Complaints
Northern Ireland Youth Forum
68 Berry Street
Belfast
BT1 1FJ

E-mail:
info@niyf.org (marking subject line as 'complaints')

In Person:
Please contact our office as listed above to make arrangements if you wish to report your complaint in person.

What happens when I make a complaint?

There are three stages in the NIYF Complaints Handling Procedure. Whilst we hope to resolve most complaints at Stage 1a, some may require further investigation and will receive a more detailed review and investigation as outlined below.

The Complaints Procedure:

- **Stage 1a** Frontline Resolution
- **Stage 1b** Head of Operations Review
- **Stage 2** Senior Management Team (SMT) Led Investigation

Stage 1a

You should make contact with the relevant NIYF staff with your complaint in the first instance. A member of the relevant team will try to resolve your complaint immediately or agree to contact you within **five working days** with an outcome. If we need longer, we will contact you and let you know when you can expect a response. If you do not know who to contact, please contact your NIYF Office for advice.

Stage 1b

If you are unhappy with the outcome at Stage 1a, please contact the Office Manager at info@niyf.org or on 028 90331990.

Your complaint will be escalated to the relevant staff member for further review at Stage 1b of the NIYF Complaints Handling Procedure. You will receive an acknowledgement within **five working days.**

A response will be provided no later than **20 working days** from initiation of stage 1b. If we need longer, we will contact you.

Stage 2

If you are unhappy with the outcome at Stage 1b, please contact the Office Manager at info@niyf.org or on 028 90331990.

Your complaint will be escalated to a member of the Senior Management Team for further investigation at Stage 2 of the NIYF Complaints Handling Procedure.

You will receive an acknowledgement within **five working days.**

A response will be provided no later than **25 working days** from initiation of stage 2. If we need longer, we will contact you.

Time Limits

To help us resolve your complaint, please contact us as soon as possible. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, we will only consider a complaint within **six months** of the service user becoming aware of the issue.

Taking it Further

If you are not happy with our final response, you can contact the Office of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman. In most instances, the Ombudsman will only investigate a complaint after all the organisation's internal processes have been exhausted.

Please note that the Ombudsman's time limit for review of complaints is **six months** from the date of EA's final response.

Office of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman
Progressive House
33 Wellington Place
Belfast
BT1 6HN
Tel: 0800 34 34 24
Email: ombudsman@ni-ombudsman.org.uk
Web: www.ni-ombudsman.org.uk

APPENDIX I

Comment/Complaint Form

If you have a complaint, it is important that you first try to resolve it directly with the appropriate service by contacting NIYF offices.

Where this has been unsuccessful, please complete the fields below providing us with as much information as possible. This will help us direct your complaint to the right person and enable us to respond as quickly as possible. Please email the completed form to info@niyf.org or post to: Complaints, Northern Ireland Youth Forum, 68 Berry Street, Belfast, BT1 1FJ

Date:

Name:

Address:

Post code:

Email address:

Phone number:

Provide as much detail as possible on your comment/complaint. For complaints, describe the incident/ issue, including when it occurred, what service was involved etc.

What steps have you taken so far to resolve this issue? Include details of any contact you've had with the relevant service.

Tell us what you would like NIYF to do to resolve this issue?